



Grand Rapids Area  
Chamber of Commerce

March 17, 2009

**RE: The future state of Michigan's Wetlands Protection Program**

Great Lakes and Environment and Appropriations: Subcommittee on Environmental Quality,

On behalf of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce and our 3,000 members we urge your serious consideration of the proposed elimination of the Wetlands Division of the Department of Environmental Quality. Presently, our Environmental Affairs Committee is weighing this issue and will be communicating our position. We encourage your consideration of the following concerns.

Many factors influence businesses decisions of whether to locate or expand in our state. In addition to the tax structure, another controllable key factor is Michigan's overall regulatory climate. The cost, timeliness and certainty of obtaining permits have a major impact on investment decisions. For these reasons, **streamlining the permitting processes within state government should be a top legislative priority when determining a course of action for the Wetlands Protection Program.**

While it is clear that funding is needed to operate the Department of Environmental Quality's programs and correct any deficiencies, increasing fees – which inherently shifts the cost to Michigan employers – is **not** a sustainable solution. **The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce will not support a program that would require higher fees on businesses.**

Our message has remained consistent: we need to work to keep Michigan competitive while developing an economic climate that entices businesses to locate here. To encourage competitiveness both regionally and nationally, **Michigan regulation cannot be more stringent than federal regulation.**

Thank you for your consideration and attention to the Chamber's concerns on this important issue. We will contact you within the next two weeks with our formal position. If you have any questions, we can be reached at 616.771.0300.

Sincerely,

Jared Rodriguez  
Vice President  
Public Policy and Government Affairs

Tara Walkotten  
Environmental Policy Coordinator  
Public Policy and Government Affairs

Connect. Grow.  
**Succeed!**

111 Pearl Street NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
T 616.771.0300  
F 616.771.0318  
www.grandrapids.org